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## **SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH JOURNAL**

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# Corruption in Poor and Rich Nations: A Comparative Review

Ojo, Ademola Eyitope<sup>1</sup> and Ojo, Ayowale Collins<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*OJ. Connects Resources, Research Unit, P.O. Box 771, Akure. Nigeria.*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of International Development, University of Manchester, UK  
Email: demociateconceptsng@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

Corruption is no doubt endemic in every society. Its prevalence and longevity is a matter of concern and for its damaging public and social consequences undermines the development capacities of nations and distorts priorities. However, reports, incidents of corruption cases and discourse have concentrated on poor developing nations as presumed den of the corrupts. Hence, this paper comparatively reviewed data obtained from World Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International) for the year of 2010, 2008, 2006 and 2004. The paper reveals that while poor nations are ranked higher in corruption indices, considerable numbers of rich developed nations are not exempted from corruption, particularly the G8 member nations. It is concluded that the earlier concept of corruption being peculiar amongst developing poor nations is evidentially overtaking by emerging consensus that corruption is a serious global epidemic. Thus it is recommended that national governments and international organizations must examine the roles of both the internal and external actors across nations to intensify policy measures and reforms to curb corruption between and within poor and rich nations.

**Keywords:** *Corruption, poor nations, public institutions, policy measures, rich nations,*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, the issue of corruption, in whatever form and levels - public and private sectors has attracted renewed interest and continued to come under fresh scrutiny amongst policymakers, governments and academics (Wei, 1997; Mauro, 1996; Maduekwe, 2002). In fact, there is growing international consensus in development discourse on the damage that corruption can do to the poor, to economic growth and to public integrity.

The issue of its reminiscences at virtually every forum worldwide, may be due to troubling upsurge of corruption (Dike, 1999), which the damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. It will not be trivial to say that the menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, extortion at toll gates and slow traffics on the highways, election irregularities and struggle for political office, favoritism and by extension nepotism, public contract splitting, queues at passport offices and ghost workers syndrome among others. And perhaps to emphasize that even the mad people on the street (in some third world nations) recognize the havoc caused by corruption - the funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the thin air.

However, because corruption has received an extensive attention in the global communities and perhaps, due to the fact that it has been overflogged in the academic discourse, corruption has received varied labels. As agreed by Dike (2001), corruption is a pandemic and global phenomenon but peculiar and endemic in many African and Asian nations, a number of studies and reports (Gurgur & Anwar, 2005; Barley, 1966) continue to focus on corruption only in the developing nations. This tends to identify corruption as an African or Asian phenomenon. These accusations and studies may be bias, indicting and is creating a cynical belief that only poor developing nations are dens of corruption in the view of the political world order. For example, recently, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had to relieve some of its officials of their positions due to bribery; in another report, all the commissioners of the European Union (EU) resigned because they, too, had been found to be corrupt beyond acceptable limits; in the United States, Enron Corporation, an energy giant and WorldCom, a telecommunication company, were charged with fraud because the companies manipulated their balanced sheets, profit and loss account and tax liabilities (Reuters, 2002). Hence, corruption is faceless until it is unveiled.

This paper therefore adopts a new approach to tackle the menace of corruption by comparing corruption in poor and rich nations of the world and set out to achieve these objectives; to compare corruption perceptions amongst rich and poor nations and to evaluate and show varied levels of corruption presence in both rich and poor nations. Hence, in view of the available literature and reports, this comparative review become imperative in that corruption seem to be a citizen of the world but with family population residing all over.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Perhaps, because corruption has received extensive attention in the global communities, corruption has broadly been defined. While Oxford Advance Learner Dictionary (2000) defines corruption as dishonesty or illegal behavior, especially of one in public authority, which synchronizes with Goel and Nelson's (2008) definition that corruption is a set of immoral and unethical phenomena causing loss of confidence in constituted authority. Corruption has also been viewed as a perversion or a change from good to bad, which involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen, 1999; Worldbank, 2005). Corruption involves efforts to secure ill-gotten wealth, illegitimate benefit or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset & Lenz, 2000).

Tishcochenko (2008) classified the causes of corruption into information deficit, lack of accountability and control, loose opportunities and incentives and social conditions. Many corrupt activities under these categories include lack of government transparency, poor press freedom, weak legal and judicial system, absence of benchmarking, democratic dysfunctioning, poor public wages, bureaucracy and bottlenecks, materialism and dependent social structure, illiteracy and poverty, etc which are illegalities in most countries. The attendant evidence of these ills may be paying and receiving bribes, embezzlement, conflicts of interest, and providing a *quid pro quo* in return for campaign gifts, nepotism and misappropriation of fund etc.

According to researchers at the World Bank, cited in Rose-Ackerman (2004), estimated worldwide bribery totals at least \$1 trillion per year, just over 3% of world income in 2002. This enormous loss has made corruption in public life and living gained abysmal effect and consequence. In fact, corruption is the bane of good governance; it increases the cost of administration and delay construction development leading to low standard of living. With corruption, the reputation of a nation becomes badly affected and investors and entrepreneurs - local or foreign - avoid investing, causing low government revenue, unemployment and poverty with their social side effects.

## **CORRUPTION IN POOR NATIONS**

The World Bank's measurement standard of \$1.25 per day poverty rate confirms that Sub-Saharan Africans are the poorest in the world with 50% poor people in 1981, 58% in 1996 and reduced to 50% again in 2005 (World Bank, 2010). This is believe to have been caused by intense corruption in many African, Asian and Latin American nations which fall within the range of poor nations - the experience of these countries illustrates the magnitude of the problem. One positive example comes from the work of Reinikka and Jakob (2004a, 2004b) is the documented severe leakage of central government funds meant for local primary schools in Uganda, saying one dollar of central government funds produced \$.20 in budget for local schools.

In Nigeria, Arowolo (2008) submitted that bribery and corruption are higher in more politicized units of government and in those with lower transparency and less meritocracy. Business executives worldwide believe that corruption in public procurement contracts is prevalent although there is considerable interregional and cross-country variation. The 2002 Executive Opinion Survey of the World Economic Forum shows the proportion of those surveyed and reported that bribery is high/very high in various areas of business life including corruption in procurement which is the reason why some business people avoid government business (Kaufmann, 2003).

Dike (2001) attributed the large-scale corruption cases in poor nations especially in Africa to include; great inequality in distribution of wealth, political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth, conflict

between changing moral codes, the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms and the absence of a strong sense of national community. However, obsession with materialism, compulsion for a shortcut to affluence, glorification and approbation [of ill-gotten wealth] by the general public and ineffective taxing system, which makes it difficult to track down people's financial activities, breeds corruption are among the reasons. Capital flight from Africa has made a dire situation worse. In 1990, it was estimated that Africans held up to US\$360 billion, or 40% of their wealth outside Africa. This compares with only 6% in East Asia and 10% in Latin America.

## **CORRUPTION IN RICH NATIONS**

The nomenclature of grouping world nations is contextual (Arowolo, 2008). However, for this research, rich nations include the G-8 nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations. One will ordinarily expect nations professing to be rich are devoid of corruption. However, it is found that rich nation's multinational firms involved in many corruptible deals with developing countries and emerging economies. Moran (2001) reported the recent evidence of multinational corporations from the US, Europe and Japan devising sophisticated payment and illicit business mechanisms with poor nations to evade home country anti-corruption laws (including the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act) with impunity. Some clear examples are the American company Halliburton oil tax deal in Nigeria; Edison Mission Energy, Mitsui, and General Electric Capital Corporation on Paiton I power project in Indonesia; several reported cases of corruption under the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Africa nations, particularly in Angolan, Gabonese and Nigerian oil and gas industries etc. The World Bank has been investigating evidence of corruption in biddings for its financed projects, resulting in several companies being barred from participating in the Bank's procurements (Worldbank, 2005).

Again, Trueheart (2000) reported in the Washington Post recent allegations in governmental procurement, that the French company Elf Aquitaine made payments to former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the French Finance Minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Former Chancellor



Kohl admitted that he accepted illegal payments but refused to confirm the source. Also, a major scandal in China revealed that state and party officials in a major port in southern China had been entirely corrupted by smugglers with a huge loss in customs revenue (Gong, 2002).

## **CORRUPTION ACROSS NATIONS**

Furtherance to this, most developing nations have a history of exploitative colonial rule and after political independence were left with a narrow and fragile economic base, economically dependent on aid and credit (Dixit, 2010). Development researchers opined that colonialism by rich nations exemplified corruption in that, for Africa, being under colonial governments, colonial lords corruptibly carted away Africa's natural resources (iron ore and copper from Uganda, Congo, etc.) and agricultural products (e.g. cocoa from Ghana and coffee from Cote D'Ivoire) without significant economic compensation (Ojo, 2010). Besides, it is a common saying in Africa that "it takes two to tango" and corruption cannot be done in isolation. For example, the recent report of corruption case of most African leaders, particularly the former Libyan leader, accused of stealing over \$200 billion and keeping in Europe and American Banks and in investments (The Nation, 2011). However, such corruption are concealed, but only revealed when the interest of the receiving rich nations are threatened.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (2012) announced that Albert "Jack" Stanley, a former chairman and chief executive officer of Kellogg, Brown & Root Inc. (KBR) was sentenced to 30 months in prison for conspiring to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) by participating in a decade-long scheme to bribe Nigerian government officials to obtain engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contracts and for conspiring to commit mail and wire fraud as part of a separate kickback scheme. In other instances, it was revealed that the state and party officials in a major port in southern China had been corrupted by allowing smugglers to propagate and caused a huge loss in customs revenue (Gong, 2002).

Moreover, Mauro (1996) declared that corruption is most prevalent where there are other forms of institutional inefficiency, such as political instability, bureaucratic red tape and weak legislative and judicial systems.

Virtually, rich nations seem to comply and have helped to ameliorate corruptible antecedents within their systems but exclude those in Africa and Asia.

The sheer damage occasioned by cross border corruption cases led to international treaties to control corruption, most notably at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for American States, the Council of Europe, and most recently, the United Nations. These documents all reflect the issue of global nature of corruption, but none of them is very powerful as a law enforcement tool (Moran, 2001). Therefore, governments (the executive, legislative and judiciary arms) and organizations must examine roles of internal and external actors (i.e. ministries, agencies, courts, non-governmental organizations and other anti corruption groups) across nations to intensify policy measures and reforms to curb corruption between and within poor and rich nations.

## METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The methodological approach to this paper is in two stages, but both based on secondary data. Secondary data is that which has been collected by others for the purpose of a particular research paper, including information from journals, textbook, statistical reports and internet based reports, etc. The initial stage involved in-depth survey of existing literature (journals, reports and textbooks) randomly selected to elicit information and identify commonly agreed perception on corruption as presented in Table 1. The next stage involved the comparative analysis of Worldwide Corruption Perception Index (CPI) compiled by Transparency International for years 2010, 2008, 2006 and 2004. In doing this, indices of between average 8 nations in each continent except Australia were randomly and sequentially selected for the years, in which Tables 2 and 3 represent poor nations and rich nations respectively.

In Table 1, the frequency was calculated by using the following equation:

$$F = \frac{N_{12}}{N} \% \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 1}$$

Percentage Frequency (F) = %, where N = Number of (YES) agree, N<sub>2</sub> = Number of NO disagree and N = Total number of respondents.

The Means Index (MI) for each nation was found using  
= 
$$\frac{\text{Summation of the Index for the years}}{(\text{No of Years})}$$
 ..... Equation 2

and the Means Index (MI) were ranked and thoroughly examined, compared and discussed.

**Table 1: Consents of Selected Literature  
(Journals, Articles and Textbooks) on Corruption**

Selected Examples Of Corruption	A	B	C	D	E	F	Percentage %	
							YES	NO
POOR NATIONS								
1 Bribery,Extortion and Embezzlement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100	0
2 Misappropriation of Public fund	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100	0
3 Favouritism and Nepotism	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100	0
4 Public work procurement and Purchase	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100	0
5 Electoral Related corruption	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100	0
Mean							100	0
RICH NATIONS								
1 Bribery, Extortion and Embezzlement	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	70	30
2 Misappropriation of Public fund	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	50	50
3 Favouritism and Nepotism	N	N	N	Y	N	N	20	80
4 Public work procurement and Purchase	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	40	60
5 Electoral Related corruption	N	Y	N	N	N	N	20	80
Mean							40	60

Source: Authors Survey; A= Arowolo (2008); B= Ojo (2010), C= Sullivan (2000); Mohamad (2009); D= Moran (2001); E= Theobald (1993)

Table 1 shows that there is growing international consensus amongst researchers that corruption is prevalent everywhere including rich nations, as exemplified in cases of suggested forms of corruption. While all of them agreed that corruption is prevalent in poor nations, 60% dissent in the case of rich nations, particular favoritism and nepotism, electoral related corruption and public procurement and purchase.

From Table 2, the Corruption Perceived Index (CPI) distribution shows that some nations are perceived to be least corrupt with mean index as high as 9.4 (Denmark), 9.3 (Sweden and Singapore) and 8.9 (Switzerland). These countries are neither member of the G8 nation nor of the world super power nations. Similarly, with Singapore and Hong Kong (third world developing nations) ranked 2 and 5 ahead of United Kingdom (ranking 8) and the United State of America (ranking 11), with mean index of 8.1 and 7.3 respectively, which depict the experiences of these countries and give some insight into the complexity of corruption and confirm that some aspects of corruption are common amongst these rich countries. This is reinforced by Trueheart (2000) that rich nations' multinational firms are involved in many corruptible deals with developing countries and emerging economies. The results in Table 2 further show certain similarities among the various rich and poor countries. For example, the mean index of Japan 7.4 (ranked 10, a G8 rich nation) compared to Chile 7.2 (ranked 12, a poor nation) further buttressed the position of perception of corruption. Similarly, the Republic of China (a G8 member nation) and Botswana (an poor African nation) both have the same mean index of 5.8 and ranked 17, which shows that corruption is not only that of a 'citizen of poor nations'.

**Table 2: Worldwide Corruption Perceptions Ranking of Countries**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>Mean Index</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Denmark	9.3	9.3	9.5	9.5	9.4	1
Sweden	9.2	9.3	9.2	9.3	9.3	2
Singapore	9.3	9.2	9.2	9.4	9.3	2
Switzerland	8.7	9	9.1	8.8	8.9	4
Canada	8.9	8.7	8.5	8.7	8.7	5
Australia	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.7	5
Hong Kong	8.4	8.1	8.3	8	8.2	7
United Kingdom	7.6	7.7	8.6	8.6	8.1	8
Germany	7.9	7.9	8	7.7	7.9	9
Japan	7.8	7.3	7.6	7	7.4	10
United States	7.1	7.3	7.3	7.5	7.3	11
Chile	7.2	6.9	7.3	7.4	7.2	12
France	6.8	6.9	7.4	6.9	7.0	13
Spain	6.1	6.5	6.8	6.9	6.6	14
Portugal	6	6.1	6.6	6.6	6.3	15
Cyprus	6.3	6.4	5.6	5.4	5.9	16
Republic of China	5.8	5.7	5.9	5.6	5.8	17
Botswana	5.8	5.8	5.6	6	5.8	17
South Korea	5.4	5.6	5.1	4.5	5.2	19
Jordan	4.7	5.1	5.3	5.3	5.1	20
Italy	3.9	4.8	6.2	5.2	5.0	21
Malaysia	4.4	5.1	5	5	4.9	22
Costa Rica	5.3	5.1	4.1	4.9	4.9	22
Namibia	4.4	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.3	24
Cuba	3.7	4.3	3.5	3.7	3.8	25
El Salvador	3.6	3.9	4	3.7	3.8	25
Colombia	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.8	25
Ghana	4.1	3.9	3.3	3.6	3.7	28
Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	3.6	3.2	4.2	3.7	28
Brazil	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.9	3.6	30

Panama	3.6	3.4	3.1	3.7	3.5	31
Peru	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.5	31
People's Republic of China	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.5	31
Romania	3.7	3.8	3.1	2.9	3.4	34
Mexico	3.1	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.4	34
Sri Lanka	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.3	36
Morocco	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.3	36
Egypt	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.1	38
Georgia	3.8	3.9	2.8	2	3.1	38
Tanzania	2.7	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.8	40
Argentina	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.8	40
Ukraine	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.5	42
Russia	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.4	43
Ecuador	2.5	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.3	44
Venezuela	2	2	2.3	2.4	2.2	45
Kenya	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.1	45
Nigeria	2.4	2.2	1.9	1.4	2.0	46
Angola	1.9	1.9	2	1.8	1.9	47
Haiti	2.2	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.8	48

Source: Extracted from the Transparency International Corruption Index, 2010, 2008, 2006 and 2004

However, generally for poor nations (with mean indices) like Nigeria (2.0), Haiti (1.8), Sri Lanka (3.3), Georgia (3.1), Peru (3.5) and Ecuador (2.3) suggest that the pandemic and precarious situation of corruption in those nations. Moreover, from Table 2, Africa, Asia, South American nations and that of the post-socialist world tend to have very low mean indices and low ranking (in descending order), suggesting that corruption might have been identified and have contributed to their slow, erratic and poor growth performance, (culminating into high poverty level), particularly when compared to other developed nations.

## CONCLUSION

The patterns of corruption vary from society to organizations and nations. This is particularly the case when we consider the poor (developing) and rich (developed) nations. Through empirical research and theoretical insight, a reasonable understanding of the causes, consequences and comparison of corruption amongst nations depicted in this paper have begun to get a sense of the prevalence of this menace and of its relationships. Hence, the earlier concept of corruption being peculiarity of developing poor nations is evidentially overtaking by emerging consensus that corruption is a serious global epidemic. The fact is that measurement of corruption, poor governance and development are correlated.

In order to understand the immense global origins, forms, dynamics and effects of corruption across nations, examining the roles of both the internal 'stakeholders' in developing societies (such as politicians, business cliques and civil servants) as well as external actors (including western multinational companies and international financial institutions) is important. It shows that richer countries, on average, have less reported corruption and better functioning system. Hence national governments and international organizations must begin and intensify policy measures, laws and critical reforms to curb corrupt practices between and within poor and rich nations.

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